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## EDITORIAL .....

### The fate of papers rejected from *Tobacco Control*

Rejecting papers is among the hardest tasks that editors must perform. We have strict page limits of 72 pages per issue and typically publish 11 original articles per issue—66 a year. We would like to publish more but our subscriber base and financial situation currently precludes this. Competition to get published is therefore tough. Of the 214 papers submitted to the journal in 2005 (as at 11 August) where decisions have been made, we have rejected 150 (69.7%), with 127 (59% of all decisions) being rejected before review. As authors ourselves, we know how disappointing a rejection can be. But it need not be the end of the road.

In July 2005, we searched the PubMed database for all 286 papers rejected by *Tobacco Control* between

March 2002 and December 2003. We searched by the first author's name and examined all papers with identical or similar titles to those submitted to *Tobacco Control*. Ninety (31.4%) papers had been published in one of 59 different PubMed indexed journals. *Preventive Medicine* (7), *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* (6), and the *European Journal of Public Health* (4) published most. The vast majority (81%) of the papers we were unable to publish were published by other international journals, with the remainder finding homes in national or regional journals. In all but six cases, the papers were published in journals with lower impact factors than *Tobacco Control*'s (3.159 in 2004).

In recent months we have been receiving an increasing number of

emails where authors ask for a preliminary opinion, before submission, about a paper's likelihood of being accepted. The editors of *Tobacco Control* perform their editorial duties on a part time basis on top of their professional work. We receive over 400 manuscripts a year, all of which must be read. We simply do not have the time to also read potential or draft manuscripts or to give authors preliminary assessments.

The average number of days we take to reach a first decision has fallen from 37.6 days in 2002 to 13.7 days in 2005. The average number of days from submission to publication has fallen from 214.3 days to 110 days in the same period.

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